1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

463 an unsatisfactory basis, and even misleading in some ways as it does not agree with the facts observed in the field study. When I faced my informant, Ali, with the census, he rejected it as unrepresentative of the occupations of the people of Silwa. He quickly asserted that they were all farmers and that all their women were housewives, and that 'there were no other jobs for them'. After some computing, he added that there were about 60 shop-keepers and pedlars, all males.[1] Men (but not women) industrial workers might be those who are working at the water-pumping station, and those engaged in the sugar-factory in Kom Ombo, a town to the south of Silwa. The number of 47 masons, Ali said, was excessive, for he could count only twenty. The 36 persons working in transport could be those who were employed in the railway stations and the making of roads. He went on to say that the categories of servants, unproductive workers, and unemployed might be those who are working in towns. He emphatically reiterated that he did not know how or from where the census authorities obtained the distribution of female occupations.

Yet whatever the census may mean by this distribution of occupations, the obvious fact is that much more than 60 per cent of the population are farmers. Some of the people who could even be classified as shop and stall keepers and industrial workers or any other occupation are normally either owners of a plot of land or partly engaged in agricultural activities.[2]

463 209 Moreover, in the village there are four families of strangers. The one living on the western edge of the village is mainly engaged in carpentry such as making of doors, chests, benches, beds, and water-wheels (which was their main work before the introduction of perennial irrigation), and some farm implements. The iron implements such as the sickle and the hoe are usually made by the itinerant blacksmith who visits the village once or twice a year. The carpenter's family is known to have originally come from the Province of Kena almost fifty years ago and have settled in Silwa ever since. They have no workshop but usually work in the homes of their customers.

[323] The main occupation of the second family, living at a distance of half a mile from the village on the northern edge, is pottery. Its members provide the village with most of the pots, pans, jars, water-pots and other utensils required for everyday life. The reason for their settlement on the northern side is to be nearer to the hills and the Nile from where they can procure clay, a whitish variety, needed for their job.

• 465 The carpenter and the potter, as well as the barber and the blacksmith, do not usually receive their fees on the spot, but go for their round during the harvest to collect their 'customs'. Every farmer is supposed to give them some of his crops, varying, of course, according to the services ren-

[939] [1] Very few women pedlars come from other provinces during harvest times to sell goods to women villagers and are called gipsies.

[2] For a general survey of agricultural problems in the Middle East, see B. A. Keen, *The Agricultural Development of the Middle East*, London, 1946.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

dered; but everyone must give them something, even 'ten or eleven cobs of millet'. The same procedure of payment applies to the village undertaker and the man who calls the prayer-times (muazzin) and the postman. In the case of the man who leads the prayers (imam), villagers send his 'custom' to his home, besides the small amount of money he receives from the 'Ministry of Religious Endowments'. In other words, the artisans as a group are maintained by the community they serve, and are not paid by a fixed price for their results. There is an observable change in this 'maintenance basis' especially in the case of the carpenter on his making of furniture and doors.

The members of the third family of strangers are Christians (Coptic Church) who mainly derive their livelihood from the income of their corn mill and who live on the other side of the railway track. They had monopolized milling for twenty years. Then four persons from the village in competition started another corn-mill. Both these undertakings later co-operated and raised the charges, and it was this that gave an impetus to the whole village last year to establish a communal corn-mill.

The fourth family which has a specialized job is that of the water-carriers who are also alien to the village. They live on its western border nearer to the Nile from which they draw water to distribute in water-skins to the homes of government officials, shopkeepers, childless couples and others, when extra water is required. They are paid either in bread, corn, or money, according to what they bring, and not on a 'maintenance basis' as their comparatively late arrival in the village has been welcomed by government officials, policemen, or childless people.

Sixty years ago the first shop was opened in the village by a family called al Hudoor from Esna, in the Province of Kena.[1] Ten years later the first man from the village itself opened the second shop. At present, there are about thirty shops of varying size which have mostly started up during the last ten years. Payment for goods sold has been, more often than not, at the end of the harvest period. The shopkeepers keep an account of what customers buy, to be presented to them at this time. The same applies at present to most of the village government officials or wage-earners, who pay their bills for purchased goods at the end of the month.

The market-day, held every Saturday (i.e. at the beginning of the week), is the main day for buying and selling. On this day economic as well as social exchange takes place, and it is said, 'Even to get the market's dust is better than not going to it'. Until three years ago the majority of the traders came from Edfu, the nearest town to Silwa. Retail traders, shoemakers, butchers, silversmiths, and coffee-makers come in to sell the villagers their goods, while commercial dealers buy crops, sheep, chickens and eggs. Since then, the number of traders from Edfu has diminished considerably, as a result of the increase in the number of village traders.

[1] Plural of 'al Hadari' meaning coming from the town, which was the name given to them by the villagers at that time and which they still retain.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

It is not claimed that these figures are anything but approximate, but they at least bring out the proportionate amount of work and show clearly the labour that can be undertaken by children in this agrarian community. They reveal that a 13-year-old boy can contribute to almost two-thirds of the actual labour in the cultivation of the land (his solo contribution for the winter crop being 440 hours out of 720; and 536 hours out of 888 hours for the summer crop).

One can assess from the approximate figures the paramount importance of children as a non-salaried essential in the labour-force, especially in a community where hired labour is extremely difficult to get. Moreover, it is not difficult to appreciate the maxim that an early son is of great service. 'It is a part of filial piety for a son to be expected to perform all that is within his capacity to relieve his father.[1] Thus from the economic point of view, a child's process of growing up connotes his father's gradual relinquishing of all the farm tasks he has been carrying out hitherto. One of the ideals of family life is for the children to do the things their parents have been doing before, as he who resembles his father has committed no injustice. This criterion is one of the elements involved in describing a boy or a girl as 'muaddab' or 'muaddabah'—disciplined. If the father has grown-up children to rely upon for work, this would certainly enhance his social prestige, being able through more leisure to participate fully in the social events, mediations and informal gatherings as he can afford the time for them.

Children are thus considered to be leisure-giving to their parents; since a leisurely father is one who is not hard-pressed by work and usually designated as 'sheikh arab'. Yet sons sometimes resent the excessive indulgence of their fathers in this privilege, when they feel that they themselves are overworked, or when incited by their in-laws or 'pals' that they are working like a donkey while father is acting like 'a great arab sheikh, enjoying the shade and the councils'. In some cases, this might lead to son and father friction, which might result in the former quitting the village.

A few people in the village have land, but no sons. In connection with this, Ali remarked that this is one of the ways in which God tested his creatures, *by not letting them have both land and sons. Such people have to get* permanent hired labour for the cultivation of their land; and these are euphemistically dubbed 'participants'. The owner provides the animals, implements, and seeds for work, while the participants provide the labour, receiving in return a quarter of the crop. Sometimes a part of the land is let to a person, the owner having nothing to do with it, but receiving one-third, or sometimes one-half, of the total crop besides paying the tax.

The economic contribution of boys applies equally to girls in connection with the household work. Girls are expected to co-operate with mothers in domestic tasks, and, as they grow older, to be increasingly able to relieve their mothers so that the latter can widen their social activities and

[1] See in this connection children's statements in the *Moral Ideology Test*, Appendix IX.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

used. The pens are made out of maize stalks, the end being sharpened to a point by a razor. This point is then divided in the middle.

After the tablets have been dried in the sun the time for writing the new assignment comes. Monitors gather the boys around them and dictate to them, either from memory or from a copy of the Koran, what they should write. The monitor dictates to each of his pupils in turn, a sentence at a time, and so comes back to the first one, and this continues until the dictation is finished. Some of the beginners do actually use the tablets for writing without actually knowing how to write, although they might be able to recite the alphabet. What really happens is that the monitor manipulates the hand of his pupil on the tablet, or he may write the lines with his fingernail on the tablet, asking the young boy to trace his writing with the pen. He then asks each of the boys to read back to him what he has written. After this the monitors themselves start writing their assignment, which they should read to the Sheikh seated at his feet.

All this takes place in the morning (until about ten o'clock), after which the children are allowed an interval for breakfast. They go home for this and return after a short time to resume the second working period, which lasts until noon, and during which the boys will be reading their written assignment under the supervision of the monitors.[1] Sitting facing the walls, with their tablets in front of them, the boys will be reciting aloud their set texts and swaying their heads and bodies forwards and backwards. The babble and din of the Kuttab is the sure sign for the Sheikh that it is busy and hard-working, for immediately the din dies down, the Sheikh will incite his boys to raise their voices and get on with their work. If the boys persist in any disobedience, the Sheikh would use his stick, laying about him without exception, hitting their backs, whereupon their voices would rise and go again at full pitch. This repetition continues until noon, when the Sheikh claps his hands, letting the boys go for their lunch.

After the lunch recess the boys return to the Kuttab, each carrying a loaf of bread for the Sheikh. This has been selected by the mother as one of her best-baked loaves. Some children do not take loaves with them, but, as a result of an agreement between the Sheikh and the father, the former receives a stipulated amount of corn at the end of each harvest. The loaf, however, is a token of the teacher's work, and ideally, he who teaches the Holy Book is not expected to ask for a remuneration. In fact, the Sheikh receives in addition to the daily loaf certain gifts on various occasions, such as when the boy finishes his alphabet and begins to write the first chapter of the Koran, at the end of each section (juza) and so on. He also receives a white garment, in addition to other gifts, when the boy finishes the whole of the Koran.

The first part of the afternoon work in the Kuttab is taken up with

[1] The time in the Kuttab is not regulated by the hour, but is usually fixed either by the noisy arrival or departure of a train, or according to the shadow cast by the sun from the wall, or a boy's shadow.

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

with open fronts which can be closed with wooden shutters when the owners are away (Fig. 11). Through the open shop-fronts the tailors are to be seen making *ǧalālīb* (long blouses; singular, *gallabīyeh*) for their customers, and in some villages one may watch the coppersmiths manufacturing bowls and jars. The vessels are hammered into shape over iron bars fixed in the ground. The iron bar is bent over at a right angle at the top, and flattened out so as to form a kind of anvil, on which the bowl or other vessel is beaten into shape.

FIG. 11. A VILLAGE STREET WITH SHOPS AND BUTCHERS' BOOTHS

Benches of bricks and mud (*maṣāṭib*, singular *maṣṭabeh*) are found outside some of the houses, and on them is usually to be seen a collection of children, fowls, goats, and even sheep, in happy promiscuity. Or perhaps a *maṣṭabeh* may be occupied solely by an old man, spinning wool, or holding a rosary in his hand and slowly passing the beads between his fingers and thumb (Fig. 12).

During harvest-time the swishing of the sticks as men and women beat the grain from the bundles of corn which they have received as wages for work in the fields,[1] resounds along the village streets.

The Yūsuf Canal (Figs. 4 and 13) flows past a village in which I have frequently resided, and there is a good deal of folklore connected with it. The water is believed to possess curative properties

[1] See Chapter X.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

attached a string of seven grains of beans and a little cotton bag containing a small quantity of the seven ingredients of one of the baskets (Fig. 37).

The midwife's fee consists of a large basket (Fig. 38) of maize, bread, dates, various nuts, and occasionally a little money.[1]

Some of the six various grains, together with the salt, are often given to the father to scatter over his fields. This is a fertility charm, and is believed to ensure his having good crops.

FIG. 38. MIDWIFE CARRYING HER WAGES ON HER HEAD

In addition to the charms mentioned above, the child sometimes has another one made of thick iron wire twisted into a particular shape (Fig. 37). This is also hung round the child's neck, but only so if, when it cries, it clenches its hands and shakes itself.

In some parts of Upper Egypt the following mixture is put into a child's eyes by the midwife on the seventh day. The woman brings an onion with her and squeezes the juice from it into a small coffee-cup, mixing with it salt, oil, and, usually, *kohl* also. Then, taking a feather, she dips it into the mixture and, opening the child's eyes, brushes the feather right across them. It is believed that this will give the child wide open and beautiful eyes.

The naming of the child is part of the seventh-day ceremony. If the parents are anxious to discover the best and luckiest name for their offspring they proceed as follows. Candles, usually four

[1] Sometimes she is, I believe, paid only in grain.

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

believed to be beneficial to the child. I have been present at one or two such ceremonies, and the following description is typical of all.

A ram had been purchased for sacrifice, and the services of a butcher engaged for the slaughter of the animal. When I arrived at the house I was conducted on to the roof, where various members of the family were awaiting me. The ram was also there, in happy ignorance of its fate. Presently the butcher arrived, and when he had ascertained that his knife was sufficiently sharp the poor animal was made to lie on the ground on its back. Then with a "*Bismillāh er-Raḥmān er-Raḥīm*" ("In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful") the butcher cut the ram's throat. I must confess that I did not see this part of the performance, for I closed my eyes and blocked up my ears, telling the people to let me know when it was all over. The carcass of the animal was then hung up and skinned. The skin was, I believe, given to the butcher, in recognition of his services. A good deal of the blood was preserved in a large bowl, and the house-door was sprinkled with it, a large dab of it being smeared on the centre.

The reason for the slaughtering of the ram at a *mūlid* for a child may be that a life is thus given for a life, and so this sacrifice of the animal will ensure the life of the child.

The child's mother and some of her female relatives now set to work to prepare the meat and cook it for the large number of guests who would assemble at the house in the evening, while I retired for a short rest. At about seven o'clock I returned to the house, where great preparations had been made, and where a considerable number of visitors had already assembled. The seat of honour had been reserved for me, and soon after I arrived a sheikh celebrated for his excellent chanting of the Ḳorān entered with his assistants. I had brought a number of boxes of cigarettes with me, and some of these were now handed round by my servant, while coffee was brought for me. Newcomers constantly arrived, till every available seat had been taken, both on benches and on the floor, and then the sheikh began to recite. Such recitations are always intoned, and are repeated entirely from memory. The performer nearly always places a hand against one side of his face while he recites, and sways in rhythmic accompaniment to his chanting. This particular sheikh is renowned for his voice,

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

forty days old and a girl eighty before they can receive this sacrament.[1]

Exception to this rule is made in cases of grave illness. According to my informant, the water for baptism is contained in a tank in the ground. After asking the mother what name is to be given to the child the priest dips the infant into the water three times, each time repeating the name chosen for it. The child is then returned to its mother, who dresses it, and then the priest takes a silken thread, which the mother has brought with her, and places it round the child, passing it under its left arm. He then ties this thread into a knot with a loop. A certain number of prayers are repeated, after which a few drops of the Eucharistic wine are given to the child to drink. Most of the people who have been present at this ceremony now take their departure, but the parents, with the child, remain in the church while the choir sing certain chants. The priest then questions the parents as to their willingness to bring up the child with a knowledge of the Christian religion, impressing on them how great their responsibility is with regard to the proper religious instruction of their child.

When the ceremony is over the parents give the priest some money, the amount varying according to their means, and then the priest unties the knot he made in the silken thread.

In all Egyptian villages a number of little boys may be seen with their heads shaved save for a few tufts of hair, which are left untouched. Each of such tufts is dedicated, in the case of Muslims, to a sheikh, or to a saint if the child's parents are Copts, or sometimes all the tufts are dedicated to one sheikh or saint. I am told that there is no *special* age for the hair to be cut in this way, but I believe it is always done in very early childhood, probably as soon as the hair has grown, for I have never seen any but young children with these tufts of hair left on their heads. The ceremonial cutting off of the tufts is not, so far as I have discovered, performed at any particular age of boyhood, but the date of the performance seems to depend on whether the father can afford the expense that the ceremony entails, such expense in some parts of Upper Egypt being considerable. It has never been suggested to me that the ceremony takes place when the boy has reached the age of puberty. Indeed, as far as my own experience goes, the tufts were removed long before that period was reached.

[1] *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* (Oxford, 1884), vol. ii, p. 263.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
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BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

When it is desired that the tufts shall be shaved off quite an important ceremony takes place—at least, according to my informant, in Asyūṭ Province. When possible the child is taken to the tomb or tombs of the sheikh or sheikhs to whom the tufts of hair are dedicated, and the tufts are removed just within, or just outside, the sacred building (Fig. 39), or the child may be taken to a mosque, where the ceremony can also be performed. If the child is a Copt it is taken to the church or churches named after the saint or saints to whom these tufts of hair have been dedicated. In the case of the Muslims the village barber is called in to remove the hair, but with the Copts a priest performs the rite. The removal of these tufts takes place if possible when the hair is four to five centimetres long, but in parts of Upper Egypt the ceremony is so expensive for a poor *fellāh* that the child may have to wait some time longer before the tufts can be removed. Bread and meat are taken to the tombs or mosques where the ceremony is to be performed, and then a feast is held to the accompaniment of dancing, beating of the drum (*darābukkeh*), hand-clapping, and *zaghārīṭ*.[1] The barber on these occasions may demand quite a large sum of money, and altogether the ceremony rarely costs less than six pounds, often more.

FIG. 39. CHILD ABOUT TO HAVE ITS TUFTS OF HAIR CUT OFF AT THE TOMB OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK

The man on the right is the barber.

[1] The shrill cries of joy uttered by women on all festive occasions.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
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BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

I have been told that if a woman remains for a long time after marriage without the prospect of a child she will pray for a son, promising that, in the event of her prayer being answered, she will have the boy's hair shaved, leaving only the tufts, which she will dedicate to the sheikh or sheikhs, or to the saint or saints, with whom she has interceded. When offering such prayers she will probably repair to the tomb of the sheikh, or to the church of the Coptic saint, to whom she wishes to appeal. I was told in Fayūm Province that if a boy is seen with his hair cut into tufts it means that he is an only son, and that this style of headdress will ensure him a long life. The initial cutting of the hair, it should be pointed out, is performed at home.

Among the Copts the rite of circumcision should be observed before baptism, according to Dr Butler.[1] The actual ceremony closely resembles the Muslim rite, so that the following description applies to the followers of both religions, the only difference being that whereas the Coptic child should have this operation before baptism, for the Muslim there is no limitation as to age, though it is always carried out during the early years of a child's life. The ceremony entails a certain expense, and is therefore sometimes carried out conjointly with a marriage ceremony, so that the cost may be shared.

The boy who is to undergo this operation has his hands and feet dyed with *ḥenna* at sunset two days before it takes place. On the following day the barber comes and cuts the boy's hair in a particular way, called *mukarraṣ*, which means 'made into little loaves or cakes.' I do not think that this form of hairdressing is in any way connected with the tufts of hair described above. After the haircutting the boy is washed, and, so I was told, coins are put on his face. This is probably the same custom as is observed at weddings, when the female visitors who wish to present the bride with small sums of money go up to her and place the coin they wish to give to her on her upturned face. In the case of the boy the money presented in this way is taken by the barber. The boy then has a particular kind of felt cap placed on his head. This cap, which is white in colour, decorated with yellow designs and tassels (Fig. 40), is purchased by the parents especially for the occasion, and worn only for this rite. The cap is further decorated by the attachment of scraps of coloured paper or bits of cloth or muslin. The boy, thus attired, is then placed on a horse, usually, I believe, with his face toward the animal's tail; he is covered up with a shawl, and, with one man holding him securely and another leading

[1] See my article in *Man*, vol. xxv, p. 263.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

selves outside the doorway, where they are joined by friends, all observing almost complete silence, except on arrival, when they may say, "*El-baḳīyeh fi ḥayātak*"—literally, "May what remains over be in your life!"—*i.e.*, "May the rest of the days of the dead be added to your life!"

The female mourners, including the professional wailers, congregate together, either inside the house or in some secluded spot outside. Here they continue to utter their piercing cries, and usually also engage in a dance. The dancers, each one swaying slightly backward and forward, move in a circle, smiting their cheeks the while with both hands in rhythmic accompaniment to their chanting and cries. I have seen women thus beating their cheeks till blood flowed. One of the dancers often beats a *nadam*, a single-membrane drum, resembling a tambourine, but without jingles.

The mourning ceremonies are continued for seven days, though very occasionally they may last for three days only. The first evening after the burial *fuḳahā* come to the house, one of them bringing a large rosary, called a *sibḥeh*, consisting of five hundred to a thousand large beads. They repeat passages from the Ḳorān a thousand times, keeping count of the recitations by means of the beads. The merit of this religious exercise is conveyed to the deceased. During the period of mourning *fuḳahā* come daily to the house to recite the Ḳorān, but the ceremony with the rosary is performed on the first night only.

The *fuḳahā* are usually given a small sum of money for their services, and also at intervals in their recitations they are refreshed with coffee and cigarettes, but no one, either performer or listener, would ever think of smoking while they are in progress. I have been present several times on such occasions, and have been much impressed by the excellence of many of the voices, as well as by the reverent attitude of all the people present. The *fuḳahā* sit cross-legged on a bench inside the house, and, as they recite, sway from side to side, holding one hand against one side of the face. One of them usually acts as leader, and the others join in as a chorus; or sometimes the chief *fiḳīh* will tell one of his subordinates to take his place and recite. The recitations last for an hour or more.

On the seventh day after a death the mourning at the house ceases, and the women, accompanied by their male relatives, visit the grave. They bring loaves of bread, called *kaḥk*, which are

DEATH AND FUNERARY CEREMONIES

either round and somewhat flat or ring-shaped. A number of very poor people and *fuḳahā* follow the mourners to the cemetery. The bread is given away to the poor in the name of the dead, and the *fuḳahā* also receive their share in return for recitations from the Ḳorān at the graveside. These men may receive small sums of money for their services in addition to the gifts of bread. The visit is repeated on the fifteenth and fortieth days after the death (see also pp. 117 ff.)

It is customary to engage two or three *fuḳahā* to give recitations regularly two or three times a year in a house where a death has taken place, to ensure the welfare of the deceased. Some people arrange for even more frequent recitations.

I will now briefly describe the various kinds of graves I have seen. The structure varies according to the nature of the ground in which the cemetery is situated. In some parts of Egypt the dead are buried along the lower desert. In this case the grave is not usually prepared beforehand, but a number of men, carrying the necessary implements for digging, accompany the funeral procession. When they arrive at the selected spot the bier on which the body lies is placed on the ground, and a shawl is fixed on sticks stuck into the ground to act as a temporary wind-screen. The diggers then set to work, and, after removing the covering of sand, dig a rectangular pit in the underlying limestone rock, oriented east and west. On the south side of the pit[1] a recess is cut, large enough to admit the corpse, which is lifted into its last resting-place by some of the men present, and with its head toward the west—*i.e.*, looking east toward Mecca. The recess is then bricked over in such a way that a chamber is formed of sufficient size to admit of the deceased sitting up in it. This is necessary on account of the belief that when the two examining angels visit the grave on the first night after burial the dead must be able to sit up while they question him. For this reason also the cords or tapes which are bound round the wrappings of the dead must be unfastened as soon as the body is laid in the grave. When the recess has been bricked over the pit is filled up and the sand piled in a mound over it, palm-branches being stuck into the sand to surmount the whole.

Sometimes instead of the mound of sand a brick superstructure such as is described below is erected above the grave. The above-

[1] So in the case of two interments that I have witnessed.

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

AGRICULTURE AND HARVEST RITES

The corn is cut with a primitive sickle (Fig. 101), and is immediately tied up into small sheaves, which are carried to the threshing-floor on the backs of camels (Fig. 102). The threshing-floor is usually a bare place near the fields, and here the corn is piled up in great heaps.

The threshing is done with a sledge-like machine, called *nōrag*, drawn by oxen. It consists of a wooden frame, on which the driver sits, and solid iron wheels which are passed over and over the corn, breaking up the stalks and separating the grain from the husks (Fig. 103). The broken stalks are collected and packed into net sacks, which are carried off on the backs of donkeys (Fig. 104). The grain, which is, of course, still mixed up with chaff, is piled up in heaps ready for winnowing. This takes place out of doors, the grain being thrown up into the air with a large wooden fork or a wooden spade (Fig. 105). The wind carries off the chaff, the grain falling below in a heap (Fig. 106). A second process is necessary in order to clear the grain entirely of chaff, and so it is carefully sifted in large sieves. The grain is then piled up into heaps, over which palm-branches are sometimes placed to prevent the wind from blowing any of it away. The heaps are left standing all night, and late in the evening it is customary for the owner to place flat, round loaves of bread among the grain, these loaves being the perquisite of the man who, on the following morning, carries it to the owner's granaries.

FIG. 99. TWO 'BRIDES OF THE CORN,' THE UPPER ONE NEW, THE LOWER SOME YEARS OLD

The granaries are usually situated on the roofs of houses, and are made of clay or basket-work.[1]

It is the custom to pay all the harvesters in kind (Fig. 107), and

[1] See pp. 153 f., 158.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

strings of women and children can be seen coming from the fields carrying their wages on their heads. The custom of paying in kind is a very ancient one, and is not confined to harvesters only. The village barber is also paid by his fellow-villagers in this way, with beans and corn, and those who thus remunerate him can

FIG. 100. A MUEDDIN RIDING HOME WITH HIS GIFT OF FIRSTFRUITS

demand his services for shaving and haircutting for a year. Only those, however, of his own village can pay the barber in this way; outsiders must pay him in cash. This rule applies also to the ferryman, who, when the fields belonging to a village lie on the opposite bank of a canal, conveys over the cattle and labourers every morning, and brings them back just before sunset (Fig. 108).

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

243
342
291

FIG. 106. WINNOWING

243
291
965

FIG. 107. A HARVESTER WITH HIS WAGES IN THE FORM OF A SHEAF OF CORN

[page 178]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE FELLĀḤIN OF UPPER EGYPT

In the chapter dealing with survivals it will be seen that some of these harvest customs can be definitely dated back to very early times in the history of the country.

I have stated above that harvesters are usually paid in kind instead of in cash, and that the women and young girls carry these wages home on their heads. The methods of threshing and winnowing the corn received as wages are more primitive than those already described in this chapter. The threshing is done by beating

FIG. 109. THRESHING WITH A STICK

with a stick (Fig. 109), and this process is often, though not always, carried out by the women. When threshed the corn is usually placed in a large, round tin bath, and the winnowing is done by simply taking up the grain in the hands and throwing it into the air (Fig. 110). The chaff is blown away by the wind, the grain falling down again into the bath. It then goes through a second process of winnowing with a sieve.

The grain, when required for use, is ground in primitive hand-mills, and "two women . . . grinding at the mill" is quite a common sight in Egyptian villages (Fig. 111). The stones from which these hand-mills are made are obtained, so I was informed, from the desert, and are chipped into the desired shape. The flour is very coarse after this grinding, and, moreover, after it has fallen

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XVII

THE VILLAGE STORY-TELLER AND HIS TALES

538 [217] THE modern Egyptian peasants are as fond of stories as were their ancestors in the days of Herodotus. Since few of the older people can read or write they have largely to depend for such entertainment on the public recitations of story-tellers. Most villages possess at least one story-teller, who, as a rule, has some trade with which he is engaged during the day. In the evening the male villagers are in the habit of congregating in one another's houses, or in some shop or *café*. To such a gathering the story-teller is a welcome addition, and he tells his [465] tales in return for very small sums of money presented to him by members of his audience. The story-teller may have taken [429] years to collect his tales, or he may have inherited them from his forbears. The peasant is an excellent *raconteur*, possessed of great imagination, very dramatic, and entirely free from self-consciousness.

538 124 114 Among my village friends are two or three story-tellers, and from them I have collected and written down a large number of tales. Some were related to me in my brother's desert camp the first year I was in Egypt. I would appoint a day for the story-teller to visit me, and, as the hour approached, I would see him and the schoolmaster who came with him to assist me in my translations of the stories riding across the lower desert on donkeys. On their arrival coffee was brought, and, when they had partaken [516] of this refreshment, the story-teller seated himself cross-legged on the ground, drew his robe around him, and, after some minutes' reflection, began one of his tales.

538 115 One of my story-teller friends, a cheery person, was a dyer by trade, as, indeed, was made evident by the state of his hands, which were stained almost as dark a blue as his cotton clothes. When he was a young boy he was apprenticed to a firm of dyers, [463] and he would listen to stories told to his fellow-workmen as they plied their task. Having a retentive memory, he stored up all

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5
FA 789 718 241
A [312] [532]

after the winnowing is completed, as a charm to secure a good

FIG. 180. ANCIENT SHAWĀDĪF
After A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, Pl. 35, Fig. 1.

harvest the following year." According to several ancient representations of winnowing this object was placed on the winnowing-floor while the winnowers were at work (Fig. 181), and an offering was laid before it consisting either of a vessel of water and dishes containing cakes, etc. (Fig. 182), or of a bowl of water only (Figs. 181 and 183).

A [532]

FA 431 465 241

FIG. 181. ABOVE: 'BRIDE OF THE CORN' ON THE EDGE OF THE WINNOWING-FLOOR. BELOW: SUPPLIES OF FOOD BESIDE THE THRESHING-FLOOR
After W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pl. 177.

I mention (p. 172) that gifts of the first-fruits are bestowed on the *mueddin* of the village mosque, the *zummāreh*-player, the barber, and the *fuḳahā*, besides the deserving poor. This custom finds a parallel in ancient Egypt. In the

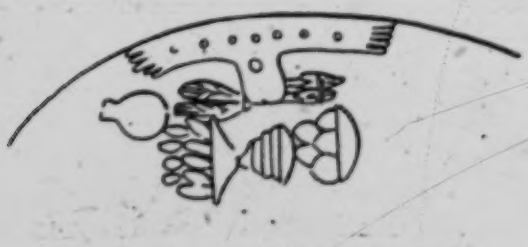
2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

F A 431 465 241

second of the famous contracts of Djefaiḥap engraved on the walls of his tomb-chapel at Asyūṭ the following passage occurs:

> That which he [Djefaiḥap] gave to them [the priesthood of the temple of Upwawet of Asyūṭ] in return [*i.e.*, for bread presented to his statue]



A 789 718 532

FIG. 182. AN ANCIENT 'BRIDE OF THE CORN'
After Norman de Garis Davies, *The Tomb of Nakht at Thebes*, p. 63.

> was one *ḥeḳat* measure of northern barley for every field of the endowment [*pr-ḏt*], from the firstfruits of the harvest of the nomarch's estate, just as [or in the measure which] every commoner of Asyūṭ gives of the firstfruits of his harvest, for he was the first to cause every one of his peasants to give it to this temple from the firstfruits of his field.[1]

The offering of the firstfruits to the *mueddin* and the *fuḳahā* is perhaps a survival of the custom referred to in the above quotation, the *mueddin*, the *fuḳahā*, and the mosque taking the place of the priests and the temple. The *fiḳih* in his funerary functions corresponds exactly to the ancient 'lector' (*ḫry-ḥb*).

A 789 718 532

FIG. 183. AN ANCIENT 'BRIDE OF THE CORN'
After Norman de Garis Davies, *ibid.*

A F 789 182

The custom of putting loaves of bread in the heaps of wheat (p. 173) may be a survival of the offerings originally made to the

A 113

[1] G. A. Reisner, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. v, p. 83; J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. i, § 546.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

corn *'arūseh*, of which mention has been made above. Or both this custom and that of bringing food to the threshing-floor and, after distributing it among friends, placing what is left in the heaps of *dura* to satisfy the *'afārīt* (pp. 176 f.) may be a survival of the presentation of offerings to the harvest-goddess Ernūtet. Such offerings to Ernūtet are often depicted in tomb-chapels of the New Kingdom. Thus Zeserkere'senb is shown making food-offerings

FIG. 184. MAKING OFFERING TO ERNŪTET
After W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pl. 143.

to that goddess "on the day in which the barley is measured, Pharmuthi 27th" (Fig. 184).[1]

In the tomb-chapels of Kha'emḥēt[2] and Nakht (Fig. 181) victuals of various sorts are represented as lying close to the threshing-floor, evidently an offering to the harvest-goddess, but at the same time reminding us at once of the custom still observed in connexion with the threshing of the *dura* (pp. 175 f.).

The paying of the harvesters and ferryman in kind (pp. 173 f., 180) finds many a parallel in ancient Egyptian records.[3] It is to

[1] See also J. G. Wilkinson, *The Ancient Egyptians*, vol. i, pp. 348, 385; A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, p. 520.
[2] W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altaegyptischen Kulturgeschichte*, Pls. 189, 194.
[3] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, p. 591; T. E. Peet, *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, vol. vii, p. 82.

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MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

F A 464 465

be noted in this connexion that the determinatives of the ancient Egyptian word *hmt*, the 'fee' paid to a ferryman, are those regularly affixed to words signifying foodstuffs—*i.e.*, an oval roll of bread above the three plural strokes, or a conical loaf and a jar of beer above a circular loaf.[1]

F A 241 412

The wooden fork used nowadays on the threshing-floor and for winnowing (p. 173 and Fig. 105) is exactly like the ancient one (Fig. 185). Also much the same sort of iron sickle as the modern one (p. 173, Fig. 101) was already in use in the Roman period

A [532 231]

FIG. 185. ANCIENT HARVESTING-FORKS
After W. Wreszinski, *op. cit.*, Pl. 134.

(Fig. 186). At an earlier date the sickle consisted of a wooden body, in shape closely resembling the lower jawbone of an ox, in which flint teeth were inserted (Fig. 173).[2]

F A 755 784

It is only necessary to read that part of chapter xiv in A. Erman and H. Ranke's *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*[3] which deals with medical knowledge to see how nearly ancient and modern prescriptions and magico-medical cures are alike. Appended comments such as "Tried and true" (p. 207) find close parallels in the famous *Papyrus Ebers*.[4] In ancient as in modern times the 'physician' wrote out spells commanding a disease to depart,[5] and both adults and children were cured of sickness, or protected against both it and ghostly malice, by means of written charms

A [113]

[1] See A. H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Oxford, 1927), pp. 515 f.
[2] See W. M. F. Petrie, *Kahun, Gurob, and Hawara* (London, 1890), p. 29; *Illahun, Kahun, and Gurob* (London, 1891), pp. 53 ff.
[3] Pp. 405 ff.; see also A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 357 ff.
[4] A. Erman, *op. cit.*, p. 359. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 356.

to prevent the locusts from settling and to hasten their departure. 466 731

A fourth case remains to be noted. It is usual, though not obligatory, for a fellah who wishes to keep in his omda's good books to work for him several days without pay. 651

The Fellah as Day Labourer

Day labourers are recruited *en masse* by a *rayess* or foreman to dig a canal, mend a road, or gather in a crop. Each man brings his own *fass*, and the whole gang carries out the required task under strict surveillance, like a gang of prisoners and often far from home. This drafting of men hired by a *rayess* into a locality where hands are short is called *tarhila*. For a twelve-hour day with a brief midday rest the pay is two or three piastres. A big landowner tells me that on his estate the fellaheen are usually paid three piastres a day, for either ploughing or working on cotton [29]. The *tarhila* is chiefly applied in Upper Egypt, where cotton is cultivated less, but labourers are more easily obtained and large estates are more common. It is also applied on State Domains which are under direct cultivation. 464 466 [465]

When day labourers are not attached to the estate they are subject to unemployment and want, except at times when big works make their help necessary. The more fortunate are engaged by the year, somewhat like the *obbligati* of Italy. Such men receive regular payment, partly in kind and partly in cash. For example, an owner lets a feddan to a fellah on credit. The wages for days spent at work for the owner are deducted from the rent payable. At the end of the year the fellah has a debit or credit according to the total of days he has worked. In other cases the fellah is paid only one piastre a day, but gets in addition the crop of maize from one feddan. 464

The temptation here is to work as little as possible. But it must be noted that owing to the abundance of hands the day labourer's wage remains extremely low. The changes due to the war have not increased it, and 5 piastres is a maximum rarely attained, whether for fellaheen, transport workers or small craftsmen [30]. Such wages are insufficient to support a fellah and his family, but a certain compensation is found in the traditional extras — the women's gleanings, 461 465

461
465 the produce of the vegetable patch, or a present of maize.

The Fellah as Share-Cropper

427 As day labourer the fellah works on large properties, as
465 *métayer* or share-cropper on a small plot of five or at most ten feddans. Under this system the owner enters into partnership with the fellah as follows:

The owner pays the taxes and irrigation dues, provides the farm implements, cattle, seed and manure. The fellah, as head of a family, provides labour for all the year's crops, from ploughing to harvest. For this he receives a fifth or a quarter of the yield of his plot. He may also bear half the expenses, in which case he takes half the crop. The contract is always verbal, and varies in detail.

This system involves no risk as it guarantees the owner a maximum of work, and the fellah his livelihood. It cannot, however, be very profitable to the fellah, because even if he labours continuously with every possible aid from his family he cannot manage to work more than five feddans. At the end of the year he has only the produce of one or one and a quarter feddans, that is to say about L.E. 12, for the efforts of his whole family over twelve months. In a bad year he will have less to show even than this. Finding
[426] himself short of money before harvest, he goes to the owner for an advance to buy a *gallabiya*, or pay the expenses of a circumcision or a funeral. Such loans, with their interest, sometimes come to more than his part of the bargain. In this case he will not only receive nothing when accounts come to be settled, but in addition his work will be already pledged for the following year.

The Fellah as Tenant Farmer

427 To rent land outright is more adventurous. The tenant takes a field at a fairly high rent, from L.E. 6 to L.E. 22 a feddan according to the district; he pays all expenses, but keeps all the produce. The owner is responsible only for taxes. The lease is long, and usually covers the full rotation of crops over two or three years.

For example a fellah of the rich district of Mit-Ghamr rents two feddans at L.E. 20 for the agricultural year. He
[243 plants one with cotton, which produces 4 *cantars* (31), each
248] worth about L.E. 3 1/2. The cotton goes to the owner, making L.E. 14 towards the rent. On the other feddan he sows

291 nearly down to the ears. Such a *libda* costs three and a half piastres.

The *gallabiya* is the principal garment. It is a tunic of an indigo blue or whitish colour, made of cotton. It is like a long sleeveless shirt, with no waist, closed up to the breast and reaching to the ankles. (The loin cloth of the Ancient Egyptians disappeared shortly before the time of the Ptolemies.) The sleeves are long, and the cut fairly full. A short opening at the chest reveals the black buttons and stripes of a waistcoat. An adult's *gallabiya* needs five [463 metres of material (about six yards) at a price of P.T. 3-6 a • 465] metre. The tailor gets three piastres for making one up (**).

When at work the fellah tucks up his *gallabiya* above his 291 knees or girds it in at the waist like a blouse, or he may take 461 it off, roll it up and put it aside to serve later as a pillow for his siesta. He then appears dressed in white with a voluminous pair of drawers held up over his hips by a cord and reaching to his knees. His shirt is covered by a waistcoat, but lower down flaps open over the drawers. When it is too hot, he takes off both waistcoat and shirt, and goes about barebacked.

291 His feet, too, are always bare. However, he usually has a rough pair of slippers, made of yellowish leather, which cover his feet to the ankles but are open at the heels. He puts them on for feasts, or after his ablutions. These slippers are locally made, and are called *balgha*.

The boys are naked under their *gallabiya*, which is shorter and lighter in colour than the men's.

Small girls wear a more complicated dress, with waist and bodice. They are often dressed in bright colours or in multicoloured prints. Their hair is always tied up in a muslin kerchief, knotted at the corners. Sometimes, for a veil, they wear a pretty face-towel bought at the market. The women, when they go out, cover their heads and, if they meet a man, the lower part of their faces with a long black veil, glossy or dull, which reaches to the feet and gives them a very graceful outline. In the Qena district this shawl (*milaya*) is dark brown.

The women's dresses, now that imported stuffs have invaded the market, are often brightly coloured. They fit close at neck and wrists, but are not waisted, and usually end in a flounce, which sweeps the ground. Their underclothes

functions of grocer and druggist, café-keeper and innkeeper, money-lender and banker. He is the most Egyptianised of Europeans. He has no objection to living right in the village, among the fellaheen if not with them, and on them if not for them. He has brought into this closed world the gramophone and the games of the West. He robs the fellaheen and teaches them the use of narcotics, but he is unfailingly obliging. Though his rates are exorbitant, he will lend money on request without asking too many questions. He sells on credit, and when he buys he pays cash. The fellaheen appreciate his resourcefulness and enterprise.

Other less important but more popular figures stand out from the mass by virtue of some well-defined social functions long sanctified by custom.

First comes the *mizayen* or barber-surgeon. He is a very busy man. He shaves all the fellaheen of his district once a month, and crops their hair. Squatting in front of his client, who also squats, he takes a dish of water between his knees, and an old razor between finger and thumb, and quickly tidies up the face and head. An aching tooth? He will pull it out. Cupping, scarification, purge? No difficulty at all. He is responsible for public health, and therefore performs vaccinations, and notifies deaths to the *'omda*. The *mizayen* also officiates at circumcisions, and on the eve of this operation, or of a wedding, the hair-cutting takes on something of a ritual significance. He surrounds it with ceremony, and in so doing dignifies his art. For his varied services he is paid either in kind at harvest time or in milliemes.

The magician or sorcerer, with his charms, his formulae, his perfumed sachets and his magic remedies, would be a serious rival to the *mizayen*, were it not that his credulous customers are chiefly women. He may live in the village or merely pass through. It is to him that the country women have recourse in order to get the help of jinns, to cast spells, to counteract the evil eye or to ensure conception. No-one can make them believe that this holy man is just a rascal and an impostor. The more magic babble he puts into his rites, the more confidence they place in him. Indeed there are many instances in which trickery is not a sufficient explanation for the effects produced. A whole book might be written on witchcraft in the village, and its affinity

563 852 rite. Three rush baskets filled with different kinds of grain are brought into the room. One supports the sieve in which the infant is lying. When it is time for the bath, the midwife shakes the sieve, as if to sift both the child and the corn. Then she puts the grain back into the basket, wraps up the child and sprinkles a few grains upon it.

853 243 431 465 The word *fitâma*, used for the weaning of children, is also used for the tenth and last watering of the maize. Sweet cakes are given to the workers that day, as to the mother, for it is the last day of suckling.

243 777 789 Harvest is always accompanied by symbolic acts. Before reaping begins, the best ears are taken and plaited into a kind of doll called the 'Bride of the Corn', which is hung up in the house to bring good luck during the ensuing year. Similarly, to bind the chain of life, the biggest grains are mixed with the seed for the next sowing, and a few fine loaves are slipped into the heap on the threshing-floor to be winnowed and sieved.

782 789 Mgr Khouzam, reporting on his pastoral visit in November 1937, wrote as follows: "On entering their houses, I blessed water, bread and corn. They drank some of the water and used the rest to sprinkle themselves, their cattle and their houses. The corn they flung into their fields. As for the bread, I was made to break it and eat a little of it. The rest they kept among their stores that God might bless what they had laid by."

789 465 431 735 248 The joy of harvest shines also on those who have not ploughed, but whose work in the village has benefited the whole community. Tradition allots the first fruits of the harvest to the reciter, the barber, the cantor of the mosque, the schoolmaster and the carpenter. After these have claimed their sheaves, the poor come to glean their share. Cotton-picking, however, gives rise to no sort of ceremony. This is perhaps because cotton has only recently been introduced; or because it is grown for profit and not for daily bread (").

245 The date palm, on the contrary, is as old as Egyptian agriculture itself, and figures at all times in the life of the people. They turn to this tree for shade and for roofing, for beds and coops, for ropes and brushes. We have seen its

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[464 857] and even prejudicial to their health". La Patrie (a Cairo newspaper), 10th November 1936.

26. Al-Mussawar, Cairo, 28th June 1935.

[651] 27. "Every male above 9 years and below 25 years of age who is accustomed to agricultural labour may be levied for such labour by the administrative authorities at the wage customary in the locality."

[249 136] 28. Gelechia Gossypiella Saunders. The boll-worm properly so called is Earias Insulana, and the leaf-worm, also a great pest, is Prodenia Litura F.

[1465] 29. Proclamation No. 258 of 1942 fixed the minimum wage for this type of work at 7½ piastres a day.

30. Between 1942 and 1945 some rises occurred in wage rates, while the official cost-of-living index rose to 300 (1939-100).

[249] 31. One feddan produces from 4 to 5 cantars of cotton, according to the quality of the seed. In 1936 there was a record average of 6.16 cantars.

32. Al-Ahram, 3.11.36. It should be noted that over-population affects the relation between supply and demand.

[426 735] 33. The solution proposed by the authorities is that the Government should take over debts to money-lenders and deduct a small amount from the fellah's annual revenues until they are paid off.

34. Ernest Chantre : Recherches anthropologiques en Egypte : Rey, Lyons, 1904.

35. J. de Morgan : Recherches sur l'origine des Egyptiens : Leroux, Paris, 1909.

36. Dr. Abbas Pasha: Fixité de la race dans la femme Egyptienne : Bulletin of Royal Geographical Society, Cairo, Vol. VI, pp. 461-70.

37. Vonderheyden : Le Henné chez les Musulmans de l'Afrique du Nord : Journal des Africanistes, Paris, 1934, Vol. IV, pp. 55-61 and 179-202.

[302] 38. There are various formulae, but the commonest have an antimony base, with an admixture of charcoal, lamp-black or soot.

4: Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 (ca. 1890) MR13 Fellahin MR13

or from inflammation in the nerves. For that reason there are few who do not complain of it every day. As the numbers of the afflicted increase so, proportionately, do the methods of the quacks in claiming to "cure" it. One way, which I know by personal experience, is the "beating" of the temple-vein. They mean by this the "cutting" of the temple-vein [with a razor][1] because this is the place where one feels the pain more than any other. The fame of a barber in the villages depends on his skill in the "cutting" of the vein. A man, called Shurbagī, on the estate of Yūsuf Pāshā Kemāl in the district of Shubrakhīt has a monopoly of the "beating of the vein." For that reason the unfortunate from all villages make for him, pouring in to him from every quarter. He has fixed his fee for "beating the vein" at one dollar for each poor person whom this ailment has driven to him; while the rich pay according to their appearance and as they wish (for there is no way of stopping the generous). The belief in the efficacy of this "cure" for *Ṣudā'* by "cutting the temple vein" is widespread in a like degree in the small villages and large towns of Egypt. I have seen in the year [p. 62] just passed, in the Ḳaṣr al-'Ainī Hospital, more than six persons *in extremis* through loss of blood due to an "operation" of this kind, not to mention those who will have died before they could be brought in, or who fainted through heart weakness.

When the whole corporation of barbers was hostilely attacking the temple-vein, it said to them what has been said very appropriately:

"Someone else did wrong and I am tormented for your sake,
Just as if I were the forefinger of the penitent."[2]

Those who are accustomed to have recourse to cutting the vein as a "cure" for *Ṣudā'* will find in fact a temporary relief after this "operation," resulting from the dulling of sensation due to the loss of a large amount of blood by effusion; but when the blood supply returns and the patient recovers his wonted health he suffers violent pains and cruel aches once more.

[1] [For an actual photographic illustration of this "operation" see Miss Blackman, *op. cit.*, p. 214. Tr.]

[2] [When a man is sorry for some action he may bite his finger in remorse. The finger is bitten though it was not to blame. Similarly with the temple-vein. Tr.]

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

52.

Reward of Politeness.

Like the German proverb: "One need but carry hat in hand to travel safely throughout the land." [539* 576]

In reading this picturesque description of the reward of politeness, do not fail to remember that the person speaking is a poor, Egyptian peasant earning only his two and a half piastres a day. (About twelve cents). [465]

Ṣabāḥ el-ḫēr, ya lamme!
Ṣabbaḥ el-ward ʿala-z-zēn.
Ya min ṣabbaḥ, saddē dēno,
wištara, we-lā baʿāš ʿalē dēn,
wištara ʿabd balfēn,
yistāhil rukāb el-ḫēl.

Good morning to you assembled here!
The roses wished the glorious one good morning.
He who wishes a good morning, wipes out his debts,
And buys and has no debts, [467]
And buys a black slave for two thousand, [435]
Who is worthy to ride upon horses. [554]

2. "The glorious one" is the Prophet. With this greeting of the roses, compare No. 6, l. 1 and No. 7, l. 2.

3. That is, at an exceptionally high price. The coin is not indicated; 2000 is frequently used as a large, round number. [801]

6. After the manner of a gentleman.